

Police frustrated winter driving warnings not heeded

Winter is not over, and OPP want drivers to keep that in mind.

In spite of issuing a stern warning prior to last week's heavy winter weather, police once again responded to a series of multi-vehicle collisions last Wednesday along Ontario highways.

Dozens of crashes, involving hundreds of vehicles, including numerous tractor trailers, occurred in various parts of southern Ontario, during poor weather and reduced visibility.

Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair, provincial commander of Traffic Safety and Operational Support, expressed his frustration.

"We are frustrated that, one week after issuing an important warning, motorists are failing to change their driving behaviour and adjust their driving to the conditions," he commented last Thursday. "Yesterday's storm was forecasted by meteorologists and gave motorists ample time to prepare or make alternative plans where non-essential travel was involved, so there is no valid excuse for the mayhem and the resulting injuries we saw on our highways and roads again yesterday."

Once again Blair urged motorists to maintain full control of their vehicles at all times, which means slowing right down and allowing extra space between vehicles. For visibility, motorists are urged to use full headlights in challenging conditions. According to Blair, police observed many drivers failing to take these critical measures and this contributed to the majority of last Wednesday's collisions.

The collisions included numerous commercial motor vehicles and, while police acknowledge that many drivers of these large vehicles are driving with care, officers continue to observe a number of them who do not slow down and leave ample space and stopping distance.

Police ask motorists to report these offenders to them.

Ontarians are incurring significant property damage and personal injury costs, and other direct costs for business and industry due to the unacceptably high volume of collisions so far this winter. Irresponsible driving cannot continue throughout the winter, said Blair. OPP hopes its education efforts and public appeals will lead to immediate changes in driver behaviour and prevent emergency responders from being called to countless collision scenes.

Motorists are encouraged to visit the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) website at www.mto.gov.on.ca for traveller's information such as winter road conditions, construction reports, road closures, traffic reports, traffic cameras and interactive mapping.